

## A Day of Silence and Holy Listening

Personal Retreat Day 2

### **Morning Prayer:**

Lord, today I enter in silence. Today, I listen for the sound of how You express Yourself in my life. In ancient days, You spoke through the wind, through fire, through storms and the movement of the Sun. The ancients saw You everywhere and in everything. They recognized Your presence in Nature, in the forests and in the whisper of leaves rustling to sudden breezes. Our thinking today is that they were foolish, frightened human beings, little more than cave dwellers wandering a primitive Earth. But perhaps not. Perhaps they were really filled with clarity, unencumbered by doubt. They stood on a silent Earth, a clean, pure Earth, empty of noise. Everything was fresh and unpolluted. They saw You everywhere because You were everything to them. You were alive in nature – You were nature. You were present in the cycles of Nature, in all life giving, sustaining ways. They recognized their vulnerability and were filled with the humbleness that came with dependency upon sacred power. I do not know how to listen for You in Nature as deeply as I would like. I have grown accustomed to trusting my mind for instructions. I do not know how to find You yet because of all the many distractions and noise in my mind. I do not know how to be completely silent from within. But I will begin by creating a silent world around me. With closed eyes, I imagine myself approaching a holy well deep within me. I drop a single pebble into that well and listen for the delicate sound of one pebble slipping into the softness of the holy center of my being. There, in this sacred, silent, inner place, I shall wait for You. I will listen and wait in the stillness – and wait even longer. Amen

**The significant question to focus on today: What is holy within me?**

### **Guiding Message:**

Today is devoted to experiencing the power of silence and holy listening. Inner silence is not the same as being quiet. Being quiet means that you are not speaking or that you have removed yourself from external noise or that you want to get away from chaos to be alone. Entering silence is the choice to turn your attention inward with the intent to listen for the rustling of holy wind in your soul. Holy listening is listening “below” your head. Instead release the endless questioning nature of your mind and breathe your attention into your solar plexus. You will have to do this again and again during the day because out of habit, you will kick into mental gear in a micro-second. You will no doubt wonder, “What I am listening for?” Holy listening is the practice of listening without an agenda, without the expectation of hearing something special about you. Prayer is not always about problem-solving or finding ways of feeling better through a stressful situation. The greatest power of prayer is its capacity to release you from

your attachments to your problems, whatever they may be. You will always have challenges. You will always encounter loss, sorrow, betrayal – if not today, certainly sometime in life. These are the ordinary problems of life. Solving one does not stop another one from happening. The true solution and the real power of prayer is its capacity to lead you inward, away from the grit and grime of all of life's challenges, for at the end of the day all of these illusions, as Buddha referred to them, are the same thing – a manifestation of the flow of patterns of life. Prayer is power. It has the power to break the hold an illusion has over you, allowing you to see a way through that problem. Prayers do not make problems evaporate. We do not have the power to make other people change the way we want or to control outcomes. Prayer changes us, empowers us, brings clarity and courage into us. Prayer will not cause the world to change. The world is as it is. But it gives us the courage to initiate changes in the world. We are the instruments of change in our world and in the greater world. Prayer is the means through which we are sustained with grace and guidance.

- Unless absolutely necessary – and I do mean **absolutely** – please do not use your cell phones or computers until after 8:00 pm today. You may have to go to work today, in which case you will find that directive particularly challenging. If you are working today, I want you to go into a prayer this morning and seal yourself in a field of grace. (All of you can do this, of course). Put yourself in the field – or in your Inner Castle, as Teresa of Avila describes the inner soul. Seal yourself in this holy place with the prayer, “Let no negative energy enter my field. Angels, stand guard around me on this day. Help me to not hear the negativity in my world. Keep me unaware of all that does not concern me. Be my protection.”
- For those of you who are able to stay home, please limit your contact with the outside world to the best of your ability. In short, do what is **essential** but not what can wait until another day.
- Walk outside – alone. If walking is a challenge, sit outside. Listen to the sounds around you. Observe your world. Notice life you have not seen before. Slow down to the speed of ordinary movement and listen to ordinary sounds.
- Take a journal and write down any thoughts that bubble up from your inner holy well.
- If you have to engage in ordinary life activities today, as I am sure many of you do, then you have to adapt sacred silence and holy listening to your world. It is never impossible to enter inner silence or to retreat to your holy center. In fact, what could be more important than to realize you can retreat to your holy center while conducting business, shopping, or during a stressful exchange with someone. You do not have to flee to a remote place to recharge and protect yourself. Your soul is resourceful and a vessel for guidance and grace. Should you find yourself in such a circumstance today, close your eyes and repeat the prayer, “In this sacred inner space, I shall wait for You. I am waiting, Lord. I am listening.”

## **Prayer and Reflection time during the day:**

Listening does not mean you will hear something. Holy listening is not about getting messages and problem-solving advice. Holy listening is about faith and building an inner bridge to the truth that this theater of life is a sacred undertaking. "I am listening, Lord. I have no questions. I seek no answers. I am breathing in grace in Your presence."

## **End of the Day Prayer:**

Lord, I will return again and again to wait for You at this holy place inside of me. I will listen for You in all ways in my world for all of creation is an expression of You. What is not You? I am the one who has been blind to the truth that life is a Divine theater. Slip into the walls of my soul, Lord. It brings me profound joy and comfort to know I can listen for You anywhere, any time. All the spiritual teachers said, Go within. And so, I have. Along the way, Lord, let me add that even a hint of Quietude would be appreciated in my life. Amen.